CANADIAN FILM INSTITUTE

# BULLETIN

142 SPARKS STREET, OTTAWA

VOL. 3, NO. 1 JANUARY, 1957

## A CANADIAN FILM ARCHIVE ?

If the motion picture had come along some few hundred years earlier in the story of man, documentary film recording cameras would have accompanied Columbus and Champlain and Cartier and Wolfe. We'd have had film coverage of the people, customs, times and happenings whose records now consist of pages of history, diaries, letters, reports, maps, charts and paintings.

That is we'd have had them if they'd been saved. Chances are that, had it happened so, the film record would have been saved and it would not be necessary today for a few voices to clamour for a Canadian film archive.

In this issue of our Bulletin we are pleased to present two of the "voices", two articles by men who have been trying to interest their fellow Canadians in the need of preserving the film record and in establishing in Canada a proper film archive.

We should also like to pay tribute here to the interest of Hye Bossin and his recurring stories on the need in Canadian Film Weekly. The active support of Hye and his paper comes to any effort to do something about a film archive.

The annual meeting of members of the Canadian Film Institute, held in Toronto in October, considered this subject which comes up for discussion every year. It was decided that a voluntary committee be set up to keep people across Canada who are interested in a film archive in touch with each other. Such a committee is presently being established by C.F.I. and the Institute will welcome correspondence from any interested persons.

## FILM ARCHIVES - CANADIAN HISTORICAL RECORDS

by J. Roby Kidd, Director,
Canadian Association
for Adult Education.

Those who talk about film archives usually have one of two kinds in mind.

They may refer to the collection of records *about* motion pictures -- films themselves, reviews or essays about films, or similar material. Perhaps the most impressive single collection of this kind in Canada are the scripts and recordings that Gerald Pratley has prepared for the CBC on film music and film production. This material, will eventually become part of the archives of the CFI, and a very valuable exhibit it will be for all film students. A collection of Norman McLaren films, together with his experimental footage, his notes and lectures, should also be organized as soon as possible. These items, and copies of motion picture "classics" and other subjects will eventually constitute a notable film archive in Canada. We ought not to waste any time in organizing it and the Canadian Film Institute is an excellent place for it to be organized, housed and administered.

## NEW FILMS FOR OLD

by Guy L. Coté
Canadian Federation of
Film Societies.

Some time ago, a film crew up in Dawson City, on location for a documentary movie, interviewed an old cinema manager about the great years of the Gold Rush. "Yep, we showed fillums in those days like they don't make 'em no more," said the old man. "We bought all the best ones an' kept 'em right here.....Had a room full of 'em once," he added, "but the place burnt down just after the war. Anyway, guess they weren't good to no-one no more, those old movies."

This year, a distinguished composer of music for Canadian motion pictures had to move to another town. Faced with the accumulated paraphernalia of many years, and a smaller apartment in his new home, he asked the organisation for which he worked whether it had an interest in keeping the partitions of his many film scores. The reply came back that there was an interest all right but no place to keep the material, and the composer regretfully threw away ten years' work which seemed of little value to him today.

**FILM ARCHIVES - CONT'D**

A second use of the term *film archives* has to do with historical records that are found on motion picture films. No systematic effort has ever been made in Canada to collect and preserve significant activities, events or personalities in motion pictures. Unfortunately many of the most valuable motion picture records have already been lost through fire, deliberate destruction or chemical decomposition. It's a shabby story; what we have thrown away. Nor has any attempt yet been made to secure footage that is still available. There is, for example, a store of films in the Library of Congress. When producers like Thomas Edison wished to copy any of their films in the years between 1894 and 1912 they deposited paper prints of these films, 35 m.m. in diameter. For more than 50 years these prints have been stored in the Library but the quality of prints is still surprizingly good. Since many of the original films themselves were on nitrate stock, and most of them have disintegrated or been lost, burned or destroyed, the prints are in many cases unique copies of the original. An excellent method has been found for putting these prints on 16 m.m. film. The writer has screened two of these and found them in quite good condition:

... The heavyweight boxing bout in 1907 when Tommy Burns of Canada became World Champion;

... The arrival of the Duke and Duchess of York (later King George V and Queen Mary) at Montreal in 1907.

But while more than eighty of the titles on the list are of films photographed in Canada or about Canadians, there is still no plan or fund for acquiring any or all of these subjects.

Other sources abound; newsreels, personal films of artists like Mary Pickford, films in the Edison Institute in New Jersey, the Eastman Museum in Rochester and the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Thousands of newsreel subjects have been shot and some of the footage exists although accidents such as the disastrous fire at Fox Movietone News several years ago have certainly destroyed a large part.

Something of the product of Associated Screen News still exists and something from the old Federal Government Motion Picture Bureau. But most of the thousands of feet produced by the Ontario Government Motion Picture Bureau was destroyed about twenty years ago in a strange act of vandalism carried out by the government itself. It is likely that considerable record material, much though not all of it of value, is in the hands of amateur photographers. Most of this could be secured if vigorous action is taken.

A few years ago a remarkable feature film, THE VIKING, was found. It is a story of a sealing expedition in Newfoundland and is introduced in splendid fashion by Sir Wilfrid Grenfell. The discovery of this film, forgotten and lost for many years, suggests that others of similar interest may still exist.

What is needed is a well-planned campaign to find, collect and make accessible these film records of the past. It will cost some money, but not large amounts, for most owners are willing to allow a print to be used for record and study purposes.

Still more important is the need of establishing a policy of collecting and maintaining suitable films which are continually being produced. In its brief to the Fowler Commission on Broadcasting the Canadian Association for Adult Education urged:

**NEW FILMS FOR OLD - CONT'D**

A Montreal journalist, three years ago, came across a projectionist who told of having a partner who had kept most of the films with which they had toured in the early silent days. Interested, the journalist discovered that the collection had been preserved all these years, and was in the hands of an eccentric gentleman who lived out of town and liked to show movies occasionally. "Oh yes," said the gentleman, at last tracked down, "I had a lot of them for a while, old French movies and scenes of Montreal taken years ago. But they were a fire hazard, you know, and when I had shown each reel a couple of times, I used to burn it." The gentleman added, proudly: "I had 5,000 reels, once."

Some years before the last war, a Canadian newsreel company decided, in the interest of economy, to streamline its operations. The librarian, faced with thousands of cans of old newsreels which were increasingly expensive to keep, made a "blitz" on this material. Shelf upon shelf was freed for current productions and the precepts of sound administration and efficiency won the day; the old stuff was chucked out and apparently hasn't been missed by anyone since.

These four stories are true, and there are many more like them. In Canada, there are hundreds of instances where seemingly trivial material, film costumes, set designs, stills, scripts, screen tests, programme announcements, exhibitor's briefs and prints of old films are being thrown away. Film-makers, naturally enough, are always more excited about their next production than about the one which they have just finished. Film-users, naturally enough, are busier than ever showing films and educating their public.

Hye Bossin, writing in 1951, said: "It is a fact that no organised record of the development of the Canadian motion picture industry and of the experiences of its pioneers is to be found in any of Canada's many public and private libraries."

And so today, important Canadian historical material on the cinema is to be found in France, in England, in the U.S.A., in foreign archives and in private collections, in the vaults of American newsreel companies and even in film museums behind the Iron Curtain. But, apart from the negatives of Government productions, very little of what still exists in Canada is actually in official hands and properly catalogued; all of the important Canadian films sit, side by side, unselected, along with millions of feet of trivia. We are all, collectively, "too busy".

There are now over twenty-five countries in which film archives have been established, about half of which are entirely supported by the state. Of the others, only five are strictly private organizations, and these receive substantial grants from cultural foundations. The International Federation of Film Archives has recognized that, since film plays a real role in the cultural and social life of people today, the preservation of film material of historical importance is in the national interest. Archives in such widely separated lands as Japan, Belgium, Brazil, Iran, Poland, France and Venezuela — not forgetting England and the U.S.A. — yearly devote considerable funds for the sole purpose of preserving all contemporary material connected with the growth of the cinema in their country, and in tracking down those elusive items which in the past have been given scant recognition.

## FILM ARCHIVES - CONCLUDED

"Records of great educational or historic worth are daily being made by TV or motion picture cameras. It is our belief that a systematic effort should be made to maintain archives for significant Canadian events and personalities that have been recorded on film. During the past decade several Canadian organizations have warned that records which we should have cherished are not being lost and more are being lost every year. For example, although several films were made on Sir Wilfrid Laurier, it is unlikely that any of these now exist. Television can supply not only what is of immediate importance, but some of the images and sounds that ought to be kept permanently as a national heritage. The time for action by the CBC, the NFB, the National Archives and interested organizations and citizens has surely come."

### CANADIAN FILM ARCHIVE COMMITTEE
(Organized April, 1951)

Hye Bossin, Managing Editor, Canadian Film Weekly, Toronto.

Walter Herbert, Director, Canada Foundation, Ottawa.

Dr. J. Roby Kidd, Director, Canadian Association for Adult Education, Toronto.

Dr. Wm. Kaye Lamb, Dominion Archivist and National Librarian, Ottawa.

O.R. Hanson, Past President, Canadian Picture Pioneers, Toronto.

N.A. Taylor, President, Canadian Picture Pioneers, Toronto.

J.J. Fitzgibbons, CBE, President, Famous Players Canadian Corp. Ltd., Toronto.

L.W. Brockington, Q.C., President, J. Arthur Rank Organization of Canada, Toronto.

B.E. Norrish, former president, Associated Screen News, Montreal.

Jule Allen, President, Theatre Holding Corp., Ltd., Toronto.

There are two kinds of films which should be preserved, (1) films which are historically important, and (2) films which are landmarks of the development of film-making.

### NATIONAL HEALTH WEEK - FEBRUARY 3-9, 1957

To assist you in planning a film program for National Health Week why not write now for copies of C.F.I.'s Special Subject Lists on ..... Dental Health, First Aid Foodhandling & Sanitation, Nursing and Personal Hygiene. A catalogue of all films in the National Health Film Library, deposited with C.F.I. may be obtained by writing the Information & Promotion Division, National Film Board, 3255 Cote de Liesse Road, Montreal, Quebec.

### The Beginning of Motion Pictures

April 14, 1894, it is generally agreed, was the day that marked the very beginning of motion pictures. On that day two Holland brothers, Andrew and George C., Ottawa business men, presented in New York City the first exhibition of motion pictures.

## NEW FILMS FOR OLD - CONCLUDED

In most of these twenty-five countries, careful attention is also given to showing the best films that have been made since the invention of the movies, and in particular to place in perspective the artistic development of their country's own cinema. They are helping to create in the minds of their people an acceptance for the art and for the lasting social influence of the medium of the motion pictures.

In the words of Ernest Lindgren, the curator of the National Film Library, a department of the British Film Institute, whose vaults house some 6,000 carefully selected films, covering a half-century of national and international history; "A film archive, properly speaking, can never be anything but a national concern. The film is a new kind of historical record; the film is a new art form. But unless records are kept, history will gain nothing; and unless technicians and the film-going public have the opportunity of studying the finest films of the past, and the cinema is able to acquire something in the nature of a tradition, it will be seriously limited in its development as an art. These are the justifications for a film archives."

### CANADA AND THE FILM

In his first Year Book of the Canadian Motion Picture Industry (1951), Editor, Hye Bossin of Canadian Film Weekly wrote a detailed story of the Canadian motion picture industry entitled, Canada and the Film. Here is a basic article that is important reading and reference for anyone interested in a Canadian Film Archives. (1951 Year Book of the Canadian Motion Picture Industry, Hye Bossin, Film Publications of Canada Ltd., 175 Bloor Street East, Toronto, 5.)

### Early Films

Two favourite subjects of early motion pictures, before the story-line was introduced, were Niagara Falls and the Rocky Mountains.

### FROM TEN TO TWELVE

Another film in the "Ages and Stages" series, produced by Crawley Film Limited, is now available from C.F.I. Three prints of FROM TEN TO TWELVE (two English, one French) have just been deposited by the Department of National Health & Welfare. This film provides opportunity to study the emotional and physical development of children from ten to twelve years. The film runs 26 minutes; is in colour, with a service charge of $3.00.

Other films in the "Ages and Stages" series, available from C.F.I. are.....HE ACTS HIS AGE, THE TERRIBLE TWOS AND THE TRUSTING THREES, THE FRUSTRATING FOURS AND THE FASCINATING FIVES and FROM SOCIABLE SIX TO NOISY NINE. Descriptions are available on request.

### The Viking

One of the early sound pictures was produced off Newfoundland in 1931. Centered on the seal fishing and taking its title from one of the ships, The Viking was produced by the Labrador Film Company. The production crew was lost when, on a second voyage for some retakes, the ship exploded.

## PREPARE FOR A FILM SHOWING

by A.L. Hepworth,
Director of Education,
CBRE & OTW

Experiments have shown that about twice as much information is retained from a film if it is given a satisfactory introduction. This process starts when you advertise that the film is to be shown and give the title and any other tidbits of information that will stimulate interest in the program.

At the meeting, before showing, introduce the film with a few brief remarks.

A good introduction may perform several jobs:

(a) by increasing interest and expectancy on what is coming.

(b) by indicating what particular contribution this film can make to the group.

(c) by pointing up "fleeting sequences" which move so fast that your group may miss them. If warned of this in advance, the members will probably be more attentive.

(d) by suggesting some questions or issues which the group may want to discuss later. If these are not identified at the beginning, they may be overlooked.

The introduction may also tell about certain limitations in the film:

(a) A poor sound track (you might indicate that very close attention is needed to distinguish the words in certain sequences. This may be because it is an old print, with no others available.)

(b) An accent (in such cases if you tell your group that the accent of speaker or commentator is a little difficult they will give closer attention; otherwise they may resent the voice and ignore the words.)

(c) Dated material (such as scenes made during the war - here you would indicate that while the film is not new it has some revelant ideas.)

(d) Absurd sequences (scenes showing motor cars or styles of another era may provoke so much amusement that the point of the film will be obscured. If your group is advised that certain odd scenes are to be expected they will still be amused but are more likely to concentrate on the major points.)

(e) Scenes which are offensive to some members of group (for example, scenes of drinking, or child training. If your group is advised that such scenes will appear but that the film has a very important idea to communicate, your members will probably continue to participate actively in the meeting instead of withdrawing or becoming resentful.)

(f) Sometimes a film will deal with a situation where structure and practices are quite different from those of yours. This same film, however, may be well worth showing because it has a valuable message to convey. It is advisable in such cases to remind your audience that they should not allow differences in form and structure to detract from the principles or message that the film seeks to convey.

Remember that your introduction -

- Should be short - not more than 3 minutes - your group wants to see a film, not hear you talk.
- Should not weaken the film's climax.
- Should not over-sell - nothing is worse in its effect than seeing a film that has been over-praised.

Sometimes it may be possible for you to procure from your public library books and pamphlets that are related to the film topic. You can display these at the meeting and lend them to anyone who wants to read them. Even though the response to this effort may not be as great as you expected, you will have the satisfaction of having sown a few seeds which may bear fruit later.

Congenial surroundings and top technical facilities are important for the successful showing of films.

## "HOW TO PLAY HOCKEY"

The world's first series of hockey instructional films in 16 mm. Eight black and white films in the series with a total running time of 73 minutes.

Films are primarily intended for use with boys in their early teens, or even younger, with the exception of two "teamplay" films which are a bit more advanced. However, the films use adults as demonstrators and do not talk down to the audience. Consequently they will be useful with beginners of any age.

The meat of each film is conveyed by the skilled adult demonstrators, though each film begins with action shots of teenage scrimmage and ends with scenes of a fast adult game. Occasional use is also make of teenagers performing drills designed to improve certain basic skills. These drills are of particular interest to the coach faced with the problem of limited ice surface and too many players.

Films are entitled.....SKATING, STICKHANDLING, PASSING, CHECKING, SHOOTING, GOALTENDING, OFFENSIVE TEAMPLAY and DEFENSIVE TEAMPLAY.

Prints of these films are now available from C.F.I. each $2.00 or $12.00 for the complete set.

The complete series is available for purchase from Crawley Films Limited for $145, (Sales tax included). Offices of Crawley Films Limited are located in.....

OTTAWA - 19 Fairmont Avenue.

TORONTO - 21 Dundas Square.

MONTREAL - 1467 Mansfield Street.

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**Storage Conditions for Films**

Films are best stored in a constant temperature of 55-65 degrees F throughout the year.

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